

COLORADO



WATER POLO

Water Polo Basics

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- Water polo has four basic elements: the counterattack, offense, defense, and 6-on-5.
- Most goals are scored on the counterattack, especially in 12U games.
- On offense, we try to pass the ball into the center first. The center is the position right in front of the goal.
- On defense, we try to press the person with the ball and stay in the passing lanes.
- 6-on-5 is a power play where an opposing defensive player has been excluded.

Counterattack (1)

- A counterattack occurs when our defense has gained possession of the ball because of a steal or a blocked shot and we are switching to offense.
- Especially in 12U games, most goals are scored on the counterattack. It is the first team strategy we teach to all new players.
- The object of the counterattack is to get the ball down the pool as quickly as possible. We use passing, and not dribbling (swimming with the ball), to move the ball.

Counterattack (2)

- The counterattack is intended to get the ball from our goalie into a shooting position as quickly as possible. To do that, we need to do four things:
 - Anticipate a shot or turnover and switch to offense.
 - One player must release for a pass from the goalie.
 - We should pass the ball up the pool rather than swim with it.
 - We should always look cross-cage for an open teammate.

Offense

- Water polo has a shot clock, meaning teams only have a certain amount of time to shoot. Shot clocks generally run from 25-35 seconds, depending on age.
- Early in each possession, we try to get the ball into the center.
- Sometimes the defender on the center is between the center and the person with the ball. We call that defensive position “fronting”.
- When the center is “fronted” the perimeter player with the ball should pass to another perimeter player and drive.
- **The key to a good offense is spacing, we must stay spread out!**

Offensive Set and Position Names



Point



Flat



Flat

This is our basic offensive set. It is called a 3 – 3. This diagram also has the names of the basic positions.

However, it can get confusing because the positions have the same names for right and left sides of the goal. So.....



Wing



Wing



Center/Hole Set



Numbering System



4



3



2

...we also use a numbering system to designate positions and plays.



5



1



6



Offense: The Next Step

- It is not easy to get the ball into the Center, and we cannot do it on every possession.
- Also, sometimes the Center is fouled and cannot shoot.
- So, what do we do when we cannot get the ball into the Center or the Center is fouled and has to pass?
 - We Pass and Drive! Driving is our word for swimming quickly toward the goal.

Offense: Driving

- For beginning players, we teach that the points or flat should drive if the Center is fouled and must pass.
- If the Center is covered and we cannot pass the ball to them, whichever perimeter player has the ball should pass to the player next to them and drive.
- It is important for the driver to drive “ball side.” This means the driver is between the defense and the ball.

Offense: Essential Points

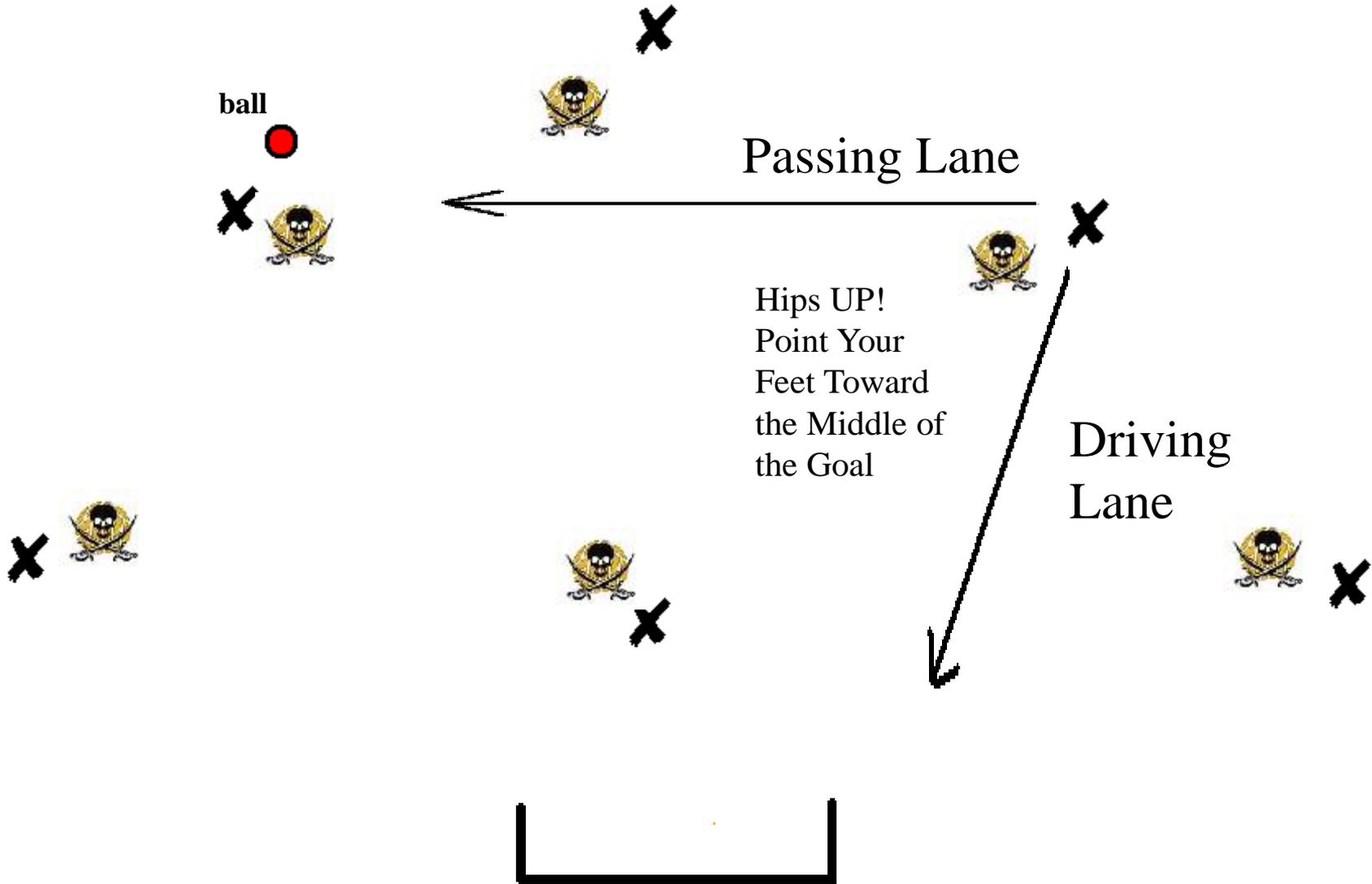
- There are a few basic things we want all players to remember when they play offense.
- Everyone must know where the center and the center defender are located. Every time an athlete receives the ball on the perimeter they should check the center and the goal.
- The point and flats should be should be ready to drive on a foul in the center and ready to pass and drive if we can't get the ball into the center.
- Wings and flats should be ready to receive the ball.
- **Above all, we must stay spaced!**
- If we get bunched up, it's very easy to guard us and steal the ball.

Defense Basics

- We usually play man-to-man defense in water polo.
- To play effective defense, the team must communicate and make sure all opposing players are covered.
- Athletes should always look around and make sure no one from the other team had gotten behind them unguarded.
- Athletes should put a hand on the player they are guarding. Our rule is you are not guarding someone until you have a hand on them and you are between them and the goal.
- Our first objective on defense is to stall the ball on the perimeter and prevent it from being passed easily. Stopping the other team from shooting for the entire shot clock is the same as a steal.
- We should avoid fouls on the perimeter as much as possible. Remember, the opposing team gets a free pass if we foul.
- The basics of proper defensive positioning are covered in the next slide.

Proper Defensive Position On the Perimeter:

BETWEEN THE TRIANGLE MADE BY THE PASSING LANE AND THE DRIVING LANE



6-on-5

- A 6-on-5, or man-down, situation occurs when one defensive player is excluded.
- We have special offensive and defensive sets that the more experienced athletes learn. For 12U and 10U the athletes we teach they should just look for a quick open shot.
- In most cases, the defender guarding the center is excluded. If the center has the ball when they are fouled, the center must pass. The offense can immediately pass back to the center for a shot. We call this the “Quick.”
- The defense’s first objective is to “crash” the center so they cannot receive the ball and shoot. After crashing, the defense’s job is to block shots. We do not play man-to-man defense in 6-on-5.
- The offense should look to get the ball back to the center before the defense crashes. If the defense is successful in crashing, the offense should pass the ball around the perimeter and look for an open shot.

The Three Most Important Skills

- No matter the situation, we want all of our athletes to play with ANTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION and AWARENESS.
- ANTICIPATION - We teach all athletes to think ahead and take action based on what is about to happen and not what just happened.
- COMMUNICATION – We teach all athletes to talk while playing, whether it is to call for the ball when they are open or to help make sure everyone is guarded when we are on defense.
- AWARENESS – We teach athletes to be aware of what is happening around them using the BPAC acronym. The letters in this acronym stand for the four things we want an athlete to know at all times: (B)all – where is the ball?; (P)layer – where is the player I am guarding or who is guarding me?; (A)rea – what is happening around me, especially behind me?; and (C)enter – what is happening in the Center position?
- Of course, the three most important skills are the most difficult to learn. We strive to work on these skills every day in practice and in every game.